



## USS Ronald Reagan Flies to Certification

*By Petty Officer 3rd Class Megan Moline  
USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76) Public Affairs*

From Vulture's Row, perched high above the flight deck of USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76), all heads turned in the direction of the roar of the on-coming jet. Together, their eyes followed as the F/A-18 Hornet zoomed past. All were watching and waiting for the moment to come.

For those who had never seen a plane land on an aircraft carrier, the excitement was palpable. For those who had been on other carriers and had seen more landings than years in their lives, the excitement was just as intense. Everyone was waiting for the same thing... the first aircraft to land on newly-commissioned Ronald Reagan, July 26, 2003.

On the third pass, the aircraft caught the wire. When it slowed to a stop and the noise of the engine faded away, cheering roared from Vulture's Row down to the flight deck. The first step was taken toward Flight Deck Certification (FDC).

For Aviation Boatswain's Mate Airman Nathaniel Walters, it was the moment he was waiting for.

"I have been training for Flight Deck Certification since I first reported on board almost two years ago," said Walters. "Not being FDC means that we're just a ship.

With the certification, we can go anywhere in the world, whenever we're needed now, and do our part for the country."

Lt. Cmdr. Scott Smith, catapult officer, explained that an aircraft carrier requires checks, which are also known as bulletins.

"Aircraft launch bulletins determine where the catapult officers set the catapult to launch aircraft. This setting changes based on the weight of the aircraft, elongation of the catapult, air temperature and wind-over-deck," said Smith. "Aircraft Recovery Bulletins determine arresting gear settings and wind-over-deck requirements during normal and emergency landings."

Cmdr. Tom Quinn, assistant Air Department officer, explained that FDC is a two-part process.

"First, we have people come out and make sure that our bulletins are correct. Then others come out and test us on how well we can launch and recover aircraft," said Quinn.

Other departments on the ship had tests to get ready for FDC as well. Airman Robert Boudreau works below the flight deck making sure fuel is clean before being sent up to aircraft.

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**Greetings families and friends of USS Ronald Reagan,**

I am delighted to be writing you for this, my first edition of "Commanding Officer's Corner" for the Gipper Gazette family gram. Much has happened since the Gipper's last publication, and I'd like to take this opportunity to personally thank those of you who joined us for the change of command ceremony, Aug. 28. The remarkable effort put forth by our Sailors in preparation for this milestone in our fledgling ship's history was made apparent in the pride and professionalism of both the ceremony and the ship's crew. Thank you to each and every one of you who made this a most memorable event.

Looking back, it's hard to believe that less than a week before the change of command, Ronald Reagan's extended family came together for the Friends and Family Day cruise. If you were an unfortunate soul who didn't make it, let me be the first to say you missed a class act event that was largely due to both the efforts of our Supply Department, as well as the entire ship's crew. Never shy in taking an opportunity to "strut their stuff," our Sailors demonstrated to family and friends just what this aircraft carrier can do when deployed to sea. Thank you to our friends in Supply Department and to all our Sailors who helped make this an extremely successful and fun event for our friends and family.



More recently, two very important events in our ship's history occurred so close together that it is hard for me to decipher which event "took me by storm;" the Norfolk area ships' SORTIE for hurricane Isabel or the chief petty officers' promotion ceremony. On a serious note, I'd like to extend a hearty thank you to the spouses, children, parents and extended families who attended the promotion ceremony in Hangar Bay 2 to support the newly-pinned chief petty officers just minutes before their Sailors were sent back to sea to weather the in-coming storm. The tolerance and bravery demonstrated by families ashore while our Sailors were at sea was truly remarkable and enabled the crew to focus on the task at hand; to protect the ship from the potential dangers brought on by the storm. Thank you, once again, for standing the watch at home while our Sailors were at sea.

And now looking ahead, after just two more months of shake down cruise and reactor testing, we have returned to the Newport News shipyard for one final period of maintenance and up-keep prior to beginning our journey around the horn for the change of homeport to San Diego. Please keep in mind that while in the yards, though maintenance and up-keep is our primary focus at work, preparing our families for the homeport change is our primary focus at home. If you haven't done so already, please take some time now to log-on to our website to find the most up-to-date information on housing in San Diego, change of homeport certificates and all sorts of helpful information that will make your up-coming move an informed one.

All the best to you and yours,  
**Captain Jim Symonds**



If you haven't already begun to plan for the West Coast move, you're behind the power curve. If you have dependents and/or household goods to move, contact the Fleet and Family Support Center to obtain a military move checklist to assist you with your planning. There are several ways to execute a PCS move. Here are a few options:

- You may choose the no-stress method and allow the government to ship everything, including your vehicle, while you fly with your dependents and wait for your household goods to arrive. This scenario offers the least amount of financial incentives.
- You can allow the government to ship your household goods while you and your dependents drive across the country. This is probably the most frequently used method of executing a PCS move. The service member receives significant entitlements for food, lodging and travel, and can easily profit from the trip. Some members may choose to turn the drive into an extended family vacation which otherwise would have been too costly.
- For the real planners, a Do-It-Yourself (DITY) move is the way to turn a PCS move into a financial windfall. Pack up all of your own belongings and load them into a rental truck and drive it across the country yourself. The government will pay you what it would have paid to a contractor to move you. Members who are looking for a way to eliminate debt or are considering the purchase of a first home will find this method a way of obtaining the cash to make it happen. The household goods office conducts workshops for members considering a DITY move.

The West Coast move is still scheduled for May-July 2004. The command will be formulating a transition plan to determine who will be allowed to relocate their dependents and household goods prior to the move and who will relocate after the ship's arrival in San Diego. Individuals with children will likely choose the later date to prevent an interruption in the school year. You should already have an idea of when you would prefer to move. Make your intentions known to your chain of command as early as possible.

If your name isn't already on the housing list, sign up ASAP. There is a long waiting list for government housing in San Diego. Civilian housing is expensive and will likely require a long commute.

Are you planning on taking your vehicle to California? The Navy will pay to ship one vehicle to San Diego. California has the most stringent restrictions on vehicle emissions in the country. If you own an old smoker, plan now to make repairs or replace the vehicle. Have you contacted your insurance agent to check on premiums in San Diego? They will be higher and you might be shocked. Gas prices are higher than they are here. Add the high cost of fuel to a potentially longer commute, and the result is a significant increase in your monthly gas bill.

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## Navy's Newest Aircraft Carrier Receives New Commanding Officer

*By Petty Officer 3rd Class Shane Tuck  
USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76) Public Affairs*

Capt. James A. Symonds relieved Capt. Bill Goodwin as the commanding officer of USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76) during a change of command ceremony Aug. 28, aboard the ship at Naval Station Norfolk, Va.

"I couldn't be prouder to serve alongside the men and women of USS Ronald Reagan," said Capt. Symonds. "These Sailors have worked tirelessly to turn her into America's newest and most technologically advanced nuclear-powered carrier.

"It is my deepest desire to uphold the highest standards of pride and tradition of the United States Navy, which are already instilled in this crew, and to honor the great name of President Ronald Reagan."

Capt. Symonds began his naval career in 1975 after graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree in Mathematics from State University of New York, Albany, N.Y.

He was commissioned at Aviation Officer Candidate School, Naval Air Station Pensacola, Fla., in 1975 and designated a Naval Flight Officer (NFO) in 1976. As an NFO, Symonds completed A-6 Bombardier/Navigator training and was assigned to Attack Squadron VA-115. He later served as an instructor at VA-128.

The Sodus, New York native was selected for pilot training in 1981 and earned his wings of gold in 1983.

As a pilot, Symonds served with VA-196 aboard USS Constellation (CV 64), and later as Operations and Maintenance Officer of VA-196.

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## Chiefs Join Ranks

*By Journalist 2nd Class Terrance Jefferson*

Twenty-five chief petty officers were added to the ranks of the 275-strong Chiefs' Mess aboard USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76) after a pinning ceremony held Sept. 16 in Hangar Bay 2.

Prior to being pinned as a chief petty officer, there is an initiation process the selectees undergo to help prepare them to become new leaders and guardians of the Navy's customs and traditions.

"The chiefs' initiation process establishes a new team dynamic," said Command Master Chief Bob Conklin. "It helps them discover their strengths and weaknesses and teaches them to work as a team toward a common goal."

According to Conklin, a chief doesn't have to be loud or big, just able to take control of any situation and ensure Sailors are focused on their job and the mission.

For some of the newest chiefs on board, making chief was, at one time, a job and a mission. However, through hard work, dedication and a dance with time, it's now an exhilarating reality.

"I feel like I am on top of the world," said Chief Petty Officer Roger Scruggs, a new chief, in V-2 division. "My dream has finally come true. I feel like I have reached the peak of a mountain."

For Chief Petty Officer Will E. Evans, educational services office, making chief was a reward in addition to a relief.

"It was an outstanding feeling," said Evans. "I spent a lot of time preparing myself to make chief, and now my focus will be starting a family and getting my degree in foreign relations."

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"We've been doing some really intense training," said Boudreau. "We pretend that something happens and we have to secure different valves. We simulate taking the fuel to the flight deck and have different scenarios of what might happen."

Another lesson learned from USS Ronald Reagan's FDC was vigilance.

Part way through certification, Airman Jorge Linarez noticed that part of the arresting gear produced excessive smoke and metal shavings. He called "foul deck" to prevent any further landings while the problems were researched.

Lt. j.g. Kyle Caldwell, air boatswain, explained that the fairlead sheave assembly was not turning properly.

"When an aircraft lands on the flight deck, the cable is fed out. What was happening here was the sheave wasn't turning," Caldwell said. "That made the cable saw into the hub. If it wasn't noticed when it was, the cable could have

sawed right through the hub and (could) have been severed."

All 58 sheaves on board were disassembled. The seals were removed and lubricated and then reassembled-- a job that takes about four hours per sheave, according to Caldwell.

The ship returned to port to make adjustments to the arresting gear system and run tests. The ship was back at sea less than two days later to continue the FDC process.

"The Flight Deck Certification has been going well. The rotation of the sheaves has improved 80 percent," Caldwell said. "It was a lot of hard work."

The hard work paid off for Quinn when he watched the aircraft land on the deck for the first time. "Seeing the Air Department come together as a team was the best moment for me. It was great to see young Sailors, who thought cleaning and painting was their only job, realize there is some fun in launching and recovering aircraft."

**COMMAND**, *continued from page 4*

He also served as Executive and Commanding Officer of VA-165 and Air Operations Officer for Commander, Sixth Fleet.

After completing Navy nuclear power training, Symonds served as Executive Officer of USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN 69), and later as Commanding Officer of USS Nashville (LPD 13).

Most recently, Symonds served as Deputy Director for Counterdrug Operations in U.S. Southern Command, Miami, Fla.

During his 28 years of service, Symonds earned the Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal, Strike Flight Medal, Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal, Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal and various unit and campaign citations.

Under his tenure, Goodwin molded his crew ... "to excel above all expectations and set standards far exceeding previous aircraft carriers," said Capt. Herm Shelanski, then ship's executive officer. "His commitment to the 'Sailor comes first' belief aided USS Ronald Reagan in earning its tremendous reputation," Shelanski added.

Goodwin has assumed duties as the Deputy Director of Plans and Policy at European Command in Stuttgart, Germany.



USS Ronald Reagan (CVN-76) Sept. 16, 2003 -- Chief Petty Officer Micheal Gustafson is rendered honors after being advanced to chief petty officer during a ceremony held in the ship's hangar bay. Official U.S. Navy Photo By Photographer's Mate 3rd Class Robert L. Erb.

### *CPO, continued from page 4*

Advancing to chief petty officer not only means increased leadership, responsibility and increased pay, but it also entails training junior Sailors to become strong leaders and valuable assets to the Navy, said Evans.

"Sailors should be well-rounded," said Evans. "They need more responsibility and a brace of moral support from their chief when they are faced with unfamiliar, yet difficult tasks."

"With my knowledge and new leadership position, my goal is to unleash the goals and ambitions of the junior Sailors on board," said Scruggs.

While Sailors are busy being ambitious and working toward accomplishing their goals, they may at times encounter a few obstacles along the way, which may require a little motivation and perseverance."

"Never give up," said Evans. "Don't be

discouraged, and always work outside your personal box to expand on your knowledge and leadership skills."

### ***Torah Dedicated on USS Ronald Reagan***

*By Petty Officer 3rd Class Megan Moline*

Approximately 30 Holocaust survivors watched as a Torah recovered from Germany was dedicated to USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76) Nov. 20, 2003.

Other guests for the ceremony included Mark Talisman, founding vice chairman of the U.S. Holocaust Council and Memorial Museum, and the Oppenheimer family, who donated the Torah.

"This is the only Holocaust Torah aboard a U.S. vessel," said Talisman. "In 1981, President Reagan spoke of his part in Europe in World War II, and when he saw the concentration camps. 'I was one of the first who saw what happened. And it happened,' President Reagan said to a Holocaust doubter."

The Torah on board CVN 76 was one of more than a thousand collected in Prague on Hitler's orders.

The Torah is on loan to USS Ronald Reagan for the next 50 years- the life expectancy of the ship. After that, the Torah will be returned to the Oppenheimer family.

"My heart will be with USS Ronald Reagan every Sabbath day, when we are reading the same passages in different places," said Oppenheimer. "Torahs throughout the world are a symbol of Jewish freedom."

"This Torah will be cherished aboard this ship not only as a symbol of religious freedom, but as a symbol of human freedom as well," said Symonds. "The fact that it came from the Holocaust will help remind Sailors that preserving human freedom is very important, and that is something we do everyday."

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Personnel with school-age children should enroll them in their new schools as early as possible. Members who have children with special needs should plan early to ensure those needs are addressed. Adults attending college should contact the Navy College to obtain enrollment and credit transfer information.

Can your PCS move become a financial windfall? Here are some of the financial incentives available to service members when executing a PCS move:

- **Dislocation Allowance (DLA):** An allowance provided to all service members relocating dependents during a PCS move. This amount varies by paygrade.
- **Temporary Lodging Expenses (TLE):** Reimbursement of hotel/motel expenses for service member and dependents while government ships household goods. Maximum of \$180 per day, not to exceed 10 days.
- **Do-It-Yourself Move (DITY):** Members can elect to move their own household goods and receive a financial incentive. The total amount varies based on total weight shipped. Higher pay grades are authorized to ship greater weights. The household goods office conducts a workshop for members considering a DITY move, which explains all of the details.
- **Privately Owned Vehicle (POV) Shipment:** The Navy will pay to ship one vehicle. The FY-04 budget proposal has requested additional funding for service members to procure a contract to ship a second vehicle. More information to follow after the final budget approval.
- **Per Diem:** Covers food and lodging for the member and dependents while driving across the country. Service members are allowed eight days to travel to San Diego. This corresponds with a maximum driving distance of 350 miles per day and a total of 2,735 miles. The example below depicts the amount a Ronald Reagan Sailor would receive in the trip to San Diego.
  - Service Member: \$85.00 per day. \$680.00
  - Dependents over 12 years of age: \$63.75 per day. \$510.00
  - Dependents under 12 years of age: \$40.00 per day. \$340.00
- **Travel Pay:** \*2,735 miles. Total family travel allowance not to exceed \$0.20 per mile. The example below depicts the amount a Ronald Reagan Sailor would receive in the trip to San Diego.
  - Service member: \$0.15 per mile \$410.25
  - Dependents: \$0.02 per mile (three or more) = \$0.05 per mile.
  - Maximum dependent incentive: \$136.75
- **Advance Pay:** Members will be authorized to take up to three months of advance pay to assist with the costs of a PCS move. Members who are currently experiencing financial management problems should be carefully counseled prior to requesting this incentive. See your Command Financial Specialist for more details.
- **House Hunting Leave:** Members will be authorized 10 days house-hunting leave, which isn't actually leave. Members will be sent TAD, no-cost, to San Diego to find housing. Members are also authorized to use the military air travel system, free of charge, while under orders to execute their house-hunting leave.



## Homeport change fair offers Reagan Sailors one-stop shop

*By Petty Officer 1st Class Shane Montgomery*

*USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76)*

*Public Affairs*

Crewmembers of USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76) and their family members participated in a homeport change fair Dec. 2-4 at the Huntington Hall gymnasium in Newport News, Va.

Some of the organizations that provided information for the event included San Diego housing, personal property and fleet and family services.

The idea behind the fair was to provide Sailors and their families with the basic tools

required to prepare for a safe and smooth move to San Diego, according to Capt. James Symonds, commanding officer, USS Ronald Reagan.

"Like any task of this magnitude, with multiple moving parts, families will have their own unique needs to fulfill in tweaking and fine-tuning the change of homeport process," said Symonds. "The homeport fair offers a place for our Navy families to begin, and it is the best way to make informed decisions during the moving process."

The fair was a huge success, according to Senior Chief Petty Officer Kimberly Knaus, USS Ronald Reagan homeport change coordinator.

"There were approximately 1,500 personnel at the fair and there are only 1,200 crewmembers eligible for homeport change certificates," said Knaus. "That tells me that there was tremendous interest by the crew."

While some Sailors have never been to San Diego, others, like Petty Officer 2nd Class Stan Bitanny of Operations Department, lived there for several years and have a different aspect on the fair.

"I'm not so concerned with where to go once I get there because I have been there before," said Bitanny. "I want to make sure my household goods arrive in a timely fashion and learn what's new about the area since I was there last. Being at the fair gives me the chance to get most of my questions answered in one location, and that is what makes it so good."

### ***Editor's Note:***

*The ship's weekly newspaper will begin spring 2004. It can be viewed at USS Ronald Reagan's website ([www.reagan.navy.mil](http://www.reagan.navy.mil)).*



USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76), Dec. 2, 2003 -- (left) Petty Officer 3rd Class Paul Hewitt, from Pensacola, Fla., and Petty Officer 1st Class Chad Abrams, from Indianapolis, browse through pamphlets during a change of homeport fair held for the ship's crew. Official U.S. Navy photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Anthony W. Walker.